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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [SF](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA OBSERVER HEAD SAYS SADC IN ZIMBABWE
TO "ASSIST" WITH ELECTIONS

REF: A. PRETORIA 0482

[1](#)B. HARARE 206

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Donald Teitelbaum. Reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) The goal of the SADC election observation delegation is to "assist the Zimbabweans" to ensure the holding of "credible elections," according to the head of the South African component of the SADC delegation, Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo. In press briefings on March 13 and 19, Mamabolo stated that the SADC delegation is not in Zimbabwe to "score some cheap political points" or "condemn, and be critical," but will rather aim to help Zimbabwe "advance and prosper in conducting democratic and transparent elections."

[1](#)2. (SBU) Mamabolo detailed the South African participation in the SADC delegation, which will include 55 persons: 15 Members of Parliament (MPs), 15 civil society members, 21 government officials, and four technical experts from the South African Independent Electoral Commission. According to press reports, the 15 MPs will include nine ANC MPs, including Deputy Speaker Andries Nel, two Democratic Alliance MPs, and one each from the Inkatha Freedom Party, the United Democratic Front, the Azanian People's Organization, and the African Democratic party. The two DA participants are reported to be the DA's Safety and Security Spokesperson, Dianne Kohler-Barnard, and its Public Enterprises Spokesman, Manie van Dyk.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Mamabolo stressed that the South Africans are part of the "collective" SADC Observer Mission, and thus individual observers should not/not make public statements outside of SADC structures. (NOTE: This was generally seen as a warning to opposition members of parliament and civil society observers. In 2005, the DA's Kohler-Barnard walked out of the final SADC observer mission meeting in "disgust," publicly challenging the claim of the delegation head that the election was "peaceful, credible and dignified." END NOTE.)

[1](#)4. (SBU) When asked at the press conferences about the problems with press freedom, observer accreditation, voter registration, delimitation, and other electoral problems,

Mamabolo simply replied that all the SADC delegation can do is "bring it to the attention" of GOZ authorities.

¶5. (C) In private meetings with Tiseke Kasambala, Human Rights Watch (HRW) Researcher and author of the new HRW report "All Over Again: Human Rights Abuses and Electoral Irregularities in the Run-up to Zimbabwe's 2008 General Elections," Mamabolo and Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Deputy Director and SADC observer Xolisa Makaya both argued that the environment in Zimbabwe is much more "peaceful" than in previous election years. Kasambala told PolOff March 20 that DFA's Makaya noted that "no election is perfect" and that Zimbabwe is "making progress."

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Assuming no major surprises in the elections themselves, we expect that South Africa will push for a generally positive, carefully worded SADC election statement that stresses the "peaceful environment." South Africa generally avoids the words "free and fair," but will instead likely suggest language such as "credible" and "transparent." Qlikely suggest language such as "credible" and "transparent." As noted in ref B, South Africa's core interest in Zimbabwe is stability, not democracy, and they view these elections in the context of a (long) process of reform. One hopeful note is that several close Embassy contacts, including Strive Masiyiwa and Wellington Chadahumbe, know Mamabolo well from his days as South African High Commissioner in Harare, and are privately lobbying him. Mamabolo has also asked IDASA analyst Sydney Masamvu to feed him information throughout the election period. We doubt this will significantly alter the final SADC statement, but Mamabolo will listen to their perspectives. END COMMENT.
BOST